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ABSTRACT

A study tested those theories upon which instruction and curriculum in speech and public communication are based. The study investigated the relationship of mode of delivery on ratings of individual speech characteristics as well as the relationship of these perceptions of effectiveness in a public communication setting. Twenty-four videotapes of undergraduate college students delivering 5-minute speeches in an introductory speech class were selected for the study, half of which used the extemporaneous mode, and the other half, the manuscript mode. Twenty-four student evaluators (communication majors chosen from an elective course in communication theory) evaluated the 24 speeches. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between the mode of delivery chosen by the speaker and the criteria on which the speech was evaluated. Ratings of these factors more frequently fell into the superior category when the mode of delivery was extemporaneous. Results also showed that the characteristics evaluated do not contribute equally to perceptions and related ratings of effectiveness. On the basis of simple bivariate correlations, delivery and speaker credibility would appear to bear the strongest relationship to perceived effectiveness. The more refined regression analysis, moreover, indicated that the prediction equation that can be generated from the data would weight delivery most heavily. (Eight tables of data are included; 16 notes are attached.) (PRA)

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AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF MODE OF DELIVERY, RATINGS OF SPEECH CHARACTERISTICS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING EFFECTIVENESS

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AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF MODE OF DELIVERY, RATINGS OF SPEECH CHARACTERISTICS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING EFFECTIVENESS

Since the establishment of speech departments in American colleges and universities, millions of students have been required to take a course in public communication for the purpose of improving oral communication skills. Instruction in this course has been based on theories which have their roots in Ancient Greece. In an effort to test scientifically those theories upon which our instruction and curriculum is based, a study was conducted. This paper reports the results of an empirical investigation of the relationship of mode of delivery on ratings of individual speech characteristics as well as the relationship of these perceptions of effectiveness in a pubilc communication setting.

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Since the establishment of speech departments in American colleges and universities, millions of students have been required to take a course in public communication for the purpose of improving oral communication skills. The rationale for such a requirement was, and is, that tutelage and practice in public speaking would prepare the student to function better in society. Instruction in this course has been based, in general, on developments in modern rhetorical theory first introduced by James Winans in his Public Speaking (1915) and traceable to the classical period. For almost seventy years, students in American colleges and universities have been taught public speaking based on theories which have their roots in Ancient Greece. Indeed, the theoretical framework of our present instruction in public communication is very old.

Today, a prevalent educational philosophy is that instruction and curricula should have a more scientific base. There is a need to examine the relationship between theories of communication and instructional practices. The call to the speech profession to conduct research studies of common practices in their classrooms was made officially at the New Orleans Conference on Research and Institutional Development in Speech Communication in 1968.[1] The conferees regarded speech communication as a field in transition: They saw contemporary speech communication with its strong historical tradition derived from the works of Aristotle "responding to the need for greater societal relevance by re-examining its theories and curricular goals in the light of new humanistic and scientific knowledge."[2] The decision was made that "a study of the developing behavioral science approach to the theory and process of speech communication required the most immediate attention."[3]

The study on which this paper is based was made not only in response to the call of the conference, but also to focus much needed attention on the canon of delivery. Specifically, this paper reports the results of an emperical investigation of the relationship of mode of delivery on ratings of individual speech characteristics as well as the relationship of these perceptions of effectiveness in a public communication setting. Effectiveness in this study was defined as how favorably a listener perceives the message of a novice public speaker delivering a five-minute speech.

Previous Research

Two research studies deal directly with the relationship of mode of delivery and effectiveness in public communication, one published in 1963, and the other, in 1944. Only one of these has some direct relationship to this study. Hildebrandt *and* Stevens's (1963) study and this one share a common purpose: to test the common assumption found in public speaking texts that the extemporaneous delivery is superior to the use of the manuscript in presenting information to an audience. However, this is where the similarity ends. Hildebrandt and Stevens's study involved two highly skilled speakers delivering the same message in both the extemporaneous and the manuscript modes to students who were pre-tested and post-tested for information retention. The simple analysis showed that the extemporaneous delivery as compared to the manuscript delivery did not result in greater information gain. Hildebrandt and Stevens concluded: "It is not method of presentation per se which determines the effectiveness of a speech, as measured by the amount learned; instead it is the ability of the individual speaker in using a particular method."[4] The authors

advised that textbooks should be revised to read: "Some speakers are more effective extemporaneously than they are when using a manuscript, and some use both methods with equal effectiveness."[5]

The only other study with a specific reference to the relationship between mode of delivery and speech effectiveness was one conducted in 1944 by Ernest Henrikson, "An Analysis of the Characteristics of Some 'Good' and 'Poor' Speakers." According to students' rankings of the best and the poorest speakers they have ever heard, the best speaker was most often characterized as one who spoke "without notes and in an optimistic mood."[6] S/he had the following characteristics: "good speech material, good delivery, a good voice, and a good personality."[7] On the other hand, the poorest speaker was characterized as "reading his speech in a factual or pessimistic mood."[8] As unscientific as this study was, it did indicate that there is a relationship between speech effectiveness and mode of delivery. After perusing a number of commonly used basic public speaking texts, I found that as common as the term effectiveness is in writings on public speaking, finding an explication of it proved difficult. In general, however, all the texts agreed that effectiveness refers to accomplishing the intended purpose of the speech. Almost all agreed with Brigance that "speech delivery may be the deciding factor in the audience's estimation of your effectiveness."[9]

A comparison of popular public speaking texts in respect to which mode of delivery is considered as contributing more to effectiveness reveals that all endorse the extemporaneous form. The extemporaneous style allows the speaker to maintain that conversational quality which Winans and his heirs deemed so essential to success in public speaking. By preparing in outline form according to ideas, the speech sounds more spontaneous. In

addition, the freedom from extensive notes allows the speaker use of delivery techniques. Thus, theoretically, a speech delivered according to the extemporaneous mode of delivery will be rated more effective.

The only misgivings expressed about the extemporaneous style are that reliance on sparse notes may result in sloppy style, silly statements, or stumbling for words.[10] Nevertheless, all agree that adequate practice with this style enables one to minimize such possibilities.

The other mode of delivery which this study investigates is the written-and-read or manuscript mode. All the public speaking texts reviewed agree that this method is not recommended except for special situations. It should only be used when accuracy in language and time limits are top priorities. A disadvantage of using the manuscript mode is that it allows very little room for creativity on the platform. Even if the speaker could perceive audience feedback, it is difficult to adapt his/her message accordingly.

Only McCroskey asserts "the stylistic superiority of the manuscript form: In radio and television when there is no possibility of immediate feedback, the manuscript form is preferable to the extemporaneous because it permits full use of style and language."[11] And this is a very limited concept. Moreover, cautions Monroe (1962), problems with style may arise because few people write in the informal style required for most speech occasions.[12]

In studies concerned with the relationship between the individual speech components and effectiveness, all but one investigation acknowledges the importance of delivery to public speaking effectiveness. Bettinghaus (1961), Heinberg (1963), Hildebrandt and Stevens (1963), Vohs (1964), and Pearce and Conklin (1971), report a significant relationship between

delivery and listener retention of material.[13] Gundersen and Hopper (1976) argue that delivery is secondary to content: "Effective content served in this study to mask the effects of ineffective delivery in all time conditions."[14] Pearce and Conklin admonish that speech teachers should "explore the differences between various styles of 'good' delivery rather than simply trying to teach students how to eliminate characteristics of 'poor' delivery";[15] Gundersen and Hopper take the position that the concern of teachers of public speaking should be composition over delivery.[16] That is not to suggest, however, that delivery is unimportant.

Recognizing the need for a clearer definition of effectiveness, the sought-after goal of communication, this study sought to define the term more clearly: What is it about the speech--the organization of ideas, the development of ideas, the credibility of the speaker, the adaptation of the speech to the audience, the speaker's delivery techniques (vocal, bodily and facial expressions), mode of delivery (extemporaneous or manuscript)--that contributes more to the reception of the speaker's message?

Question and Hypotheses

This study was concerned with two questions: (1) Does the mode of delivery chosen by a novice speaker have any relationship to the success of his/her communication? and (2) To what extent do the components involved in preparing and delivering a speech contribute to the total effectiveness of the communication?

Question 1 was investigated by testing the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between the mode of delivery chosen by the speaker and the criteria by which a speech is evaluated.

The answer to Question 2 was generated by testing the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The criteria on which the speeches are evaluated do not contribute equally to the total effectivenss ratings.

Methodology

Population and Sample

This study measured the effect each speaker/speech had on each listener in the audience. The term speaker/speech is used because I believe one cannot be separated from the other: Self-expression involves the self as well as what is expressed.

Two groups of undergraduate college students were involved. The first group, the speakers, were chosen from videotapes of students from four classes of a course entitled Introduction to Speech. The purpose of this course was to establish an awareness of the communication process. In it, students become familiar with the techniques of effective communication on all three levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and public. The videotapes, part of their final examination, were of the students' delivering five-minute speeches informing the audience about their future careers. This rather bland topic was purposely chosen so that topic would not be a criterion for evaluation of effectiveness in this study. The students did have the opportunity to choose either the extemporaneous or the manuscript mode of delivery.

From the 84 taped speeches, the instructor, after evaluating the speeches according to the instrument used in this study, reduced the sample to 24. Approximately half were speakers who chose the extemporaneous mode, and half were of those who chose the manuscript mode

of delivery. Within each of the two groups, I selected a nearly equal number of superior, good, fair, and inferior speeches. These determinations were based upon the grade each speech was given by the instructor: Superior speeches were those receiving A, good speeches were those receiving B, etc. I chose four examples of each ranking for each of the two modes of delivery. Then, these speeches were re-taped in random order.

The second group, which supplied the raw data for this study, were the student evaluators of the previously mentioned speeches. The members consisted of 24 communication majors chosen from an elective course in speech communication entitled Communication Theory. This course was concerned with the systematic study of the communication process. The students participated in this study as part of their introduction to the use of empirical methodology for understanding communication.

The number of "cases" in this study is 576, with each of the 24 speeches being rated by each of the 24 evaluators.

Instrumentation and Procedure

The videotapes were shown in random order to the evaluators in two sessions. The simple instrument of measurement described below was explained. The items were chosen because they tend to reflect the criteria commonly taught in basic public speaking courses. The definitions of the terms used in the instrument were reviewed: "Mode of delivery refers to the method the speaker used to prepare his/her text: The extemporaneous mode is generally prepared in outline form; the exact wording to the speech is not explicitly prepared. The manuscript mode, on the other hand, calls for the speech to be written and read verbatim." The evaluators were

instructed to react to each speech as members of a general audience would. As soon as they viewed each speech, the video player was stopped, and they recorded their reactions according to their immediate perceptions. The rating scale was preceded by the following introduction: "To what degree was the communication of the speaker/speech effective to you the listener? That is, according to your perceptions, how much meaning regarding each of the categories of evaluation was received by you from the speaker/speech?"

_____ 1-2 Speaker #

Rate the following criteria for the speech accordingly:

5 Superior 4 Good 3 Fair 2 Poor 1 Inferior

_____ 3 ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS: Were ideas presented in a logical order?

_____ 4 DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS: Was speaker's language clear and appropriate?

_____ 5 CREDIBILITY: Did the speaker appear competent and sincere?

_____ 6 ADAPTATION TO AUDIENCE: Did you feel the speaker was talking <u>with</u> you rather than <u>at</u> you?

_____ 7 DELIVERY: How well did the speaker use his/her body and voice to augment his/her verbal message?

_____ 8 TOTAL EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent did the speaker contribute meaning?

_____ 9 MODE OF DELIVERY chosen by the Speaker:

1 extemporaneous 2 manuscript

Results

Findings on Mode of Delivery and Total Effectiveness

To begin the analyses for Hypotheses 1, a crosstabulation procedure was performed with each of the criteria on which the speeches were evaluated as the dependent variable and the mode of delivery chosen by the speaker as the independent variable. A X^2 test of relationship was computed for each of the six speech factors, including total effectiveness. The results are shown in the following tables. Obtained frequencies are presented as percentages.

TABLE 1

Organization of Ideas by Mode of Delivery Chosen by the Speaker

Mode of Delivery	Ranking of Organization of Ideas					
	Inferior	Poor	Fair	Good	Superior	N
Extemporaneous	3.1	7.6	29.1	34.9	25.3	288
Manuscript	1.4	5.6	27.2	47.0	18.8	288
Total	2.3	6.6	28.1	41.0	22.0	576

$X^2 = 10.83$, p .05

Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between Mode of Delivery and Organization of Ideas (p .05). Speakers using the extemporaneous mode received a higher percentage of superior ratings and a much lower percentage of ratings of good.

TABLE 2

Development of Ideas by Mode of Delivery
Chosen by the Speaker

Mode of Delivery Chosen by Speaker	Ranking of Development of Ideas					
	Inferior	Poor	Fair	Good	Superior	N
Extemporaneous	2.1	11.1	30.1	34.3	22.5	288
Manuscript	2.1	9.4	35.9	39.7	12.9	288
Total	2.1	10.2	33.0	37.0	17.7	576

$X^2 = 10.50$, p .05

Table 2 demonstrates that there is a significant relationship between Mode of Delivery and the rating criterion Development of Ideas (p .05). The percentage of superior ratings for the extemporaneous mode was nearly twice that for the manuscirpt mode.

TABLE 3

Credibility of the Speaker by Mode of
Delivery Chosen by the Speaker

Mode of Delivery Chosen by Speaker	Ranking of Credibility of Speaker					
	Inferior	Poor	Fair	Good	Superior	N
Extemporaneous	4.8	10.0	20.8	29.1	35.3	288
Manuscript	2.4	14.3	30.3	40.4	12.5	288
Total	3.6	12.2	25.5	34.7	24.0	576

$X^2 = 46.02$, p .001

Table 3 shows a very strong relationship between Mode of Delivery and the ratings of Credibility of the Speaker (p .001). The percentage of superior ratings of extemporaneous speeches was nearly three times as great as the percentage of such ratings for manuscript speeches.

TABLE 4

Adaptation to Audience by Mode of Delivery Chosen by the Speaker

Mode of Delivery Chosen by Speaker	Ranking of Adaptation to Audience					
	Inferior	Poor	Fair	Good	Superior	N
Extemporaneous	2.4	11.1	29.4	31.1	26.0	288
Manuscript	3.1	19.9	45.6	27.2	4.2	288
Total	2.8	15.5	37.5	29.2	15.1	576

$X^2 = 63.54$, p .001

Table 4 shows quite a strong relationship between Mode of Delivery and Adaptation to Audience (p .001). Of those speeches ranked superior, six times as many were delivered according to the extemporaneous mode.

TABLE 5

Delivery Techniques Used by the Speaker by Mode of Delivery Chosen by the Speaker

Mode of Delivery Chosen by Speaker	Ranking of Delivery Techniques					
	Inferior	Poor	Fair	Good	Superior	N
Extemporaneous	8.0	16.3	23.5	26.0	26.3	288
Manuscript	8.7	24.4	39.0	21.6	6.3	288
Total	8.3	20.3	31.3	23.4	16.3	576

$X^2 = 52.38$, p .001

The results for Delivery Techniques Used by the Speaker, in respect to percentage of superior ratings, were almost identical to those for Adaptation to the Audience and provide further evidence of the superioutes of the extemporaneous mode for perceived effectiveness.

TABLE 6

Total Effectiveness of the Speech by Mode of Delivery Chosen by the Speaker

Mode of Delivery Chosen by Speaker	Ranking of Total Effectiveness					
	Inferior	Poor	Fair	Good	Superior	N
Extemporaneous	3.1	17.4	22.6	31.3	25.7	288
Manuscript	1.0	18.1	40.1	32.8	8.0	288
Total	2.1	17.7	31.3	32.0	16.9	576

$X^2 = 43.82$, $p < .001$

Table 6 again demonstrates a strong relationship between mode of delivery and the ranking criterion Total Effectiveness ($p < .001$). The percentage of superior ratings for extemporaneous speeches was more than three times as great as that for manuscript speeches.

The Relationship of Individual Speech Characteristics to Ratings of Effectiveness

Testing the second research hypothesis involved two types of statistical analyses. The first entailed the calculation of Pearson's r for each speech characteristic and the total effectiveness measure. The results are summarized in Table 7.

Each characteristic bore a similar relationship to effectiveness ratings, with credibility of the speaker and delivery both exhibiting the strongest and virtually identical relationships to the dependent variable. Such values can be misleading, however, because of intercorrelations among the independent variables. Hence, to determine more precisely the unique contribution of each speech characteristic to ratings of total effectiveness, regression analysis was employed. The results appear in Table 8. Collectively, the five speech factors evaluated correlated with

the measure of total effectiveness at .856 and accounted for 73.4 percent of the variance. In addition, delivery was the factor having the highest beta weight. In other words, in using the ratings of the five factors studied to predict ratings of total effectiveness, delivery would contribute most heavily to the predicted score.

TABLE 7

Correlation of Five Speech Factors With Ratings of Effectiveness

Criteria Representing Parts of the Gestalt	The Gestalt Total Effectivness Correlation Coefficient
Organization of Ideas	.710*
Development of Ideas	.714*
Credibility of the Speaker	.781*
Adaptation to the Audience	.704*
Delivery	.780*

*p .001

TABLE 8

Regression Predicting Total Effectiveness

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Reg. Coefficient (beta)	Std. Error
Org. of Ideas	3.74	.95	.242***	.032
Dev. of Ideas	3.58	.96	.074*	.036
Credibility	3.63	1.08	.271***	.039
Adpt. to Audience	3.38	1.00	.135***	.032
Delivery	3.20	1.18	.328***	.036
Multiple R			.856	
Std. Error			.540	
R^2			.734	

N = 576
*p .05
**p .01
***p .001

Discussion

The results of this study show that there is a significant relationship between the mode of delivery chosen by the speaker and the criteria on which the speech was evaluated. Ratings of these factors more frequently fall into the superior category when the mode of delivery is extemporaneous. This data clearly support Hypothesis 1.

The data from the study also provide support for Hypothesis 2. That is, the characteristics evaluated do not contribute equally to perceptions

and related ratings of effectiveness. On the basis of simple bivariate correlations, delivery and speaker credebility would appear to bear the strongest relationship to perceived effectiveness. The more refined regression analysis, moreover, indicated that the prediction equation that can be generated from the data would weight delivery most heavily.

The implications of this study are fairly obvious. First and foremost, it offers supporting data to the popular theory found in prominent public speaking texts that delivery and effectiveness are very significantly related. Therefore, its findings should create an awareness in teachers of public address and rhetoric, in particular, that how one presents his/her message is important and may possibly be equal in importance to what one has to say. A second implication of this study is that greater interest must be expressed by professors of public discourse in the fields of communication theory and nonverbal communication. Investigation into the research made in these particular areas should result in a reconsideration of the role played by delivery in effecting successful public communication.

This study reported is just a beginning, an effort at creating an awareness for the need to recognize the importance of public speaking training. More research probing the manifestations of communication is needed. The theories on which instruction is based in public communication courses need further testing. The criteria on which a speech is rated requires closer examination. The results of this study, I hope, may serve as a stimulus for such inquiry.

Notes

[1] Robert J. Kibler, and Larry L. Barker, Conceptual Frontiers in Speech-Communication. Report of the New Orleans Conference on Research and Instructional Development, Speech Association of America, 1969.

[2] Kibler and Barker, 6.

[3] Kibler and Barker, 4.

[4] Herbert W. Hildebrandt, and Walter W. Stevens. "Manuscript and Extemporaneous Delivery in Communicating Information," Speech Monographs 30 (1963): 371-372.

[5] Hildebrandt and Stevens, 373.

[6] Ernest Henrikson, "An Analysis of the Characteristics of Some "Good" and "Poor" Speakers," Speech Monographs 11 (1944): 124.

[7] Henrikson, 124.

[8] Henrikson, 124.

[9] Wwiliam Norwood Brigance, Speech. Its Techniques and Disciplines on a Free Society, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1961), 123.

[10] See, for example, James A. Winans Public Speaking rev. ed. (New York: The Century Co., 1926), 386. See also Joseph DeVito, The Elements of Public Speaking (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 334.

[11] James C. McCroskey, An Introduction to Rhetorical Communication. The Theory and Practices of Public Speaking (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968) 112.

[12] Alan H. Monroe, Principles and Types of Speech, rev. (New York: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1962), 135.

[13] Edwin Bettinghaus, "The Operation of Congruity in an Oral Communication Setting," Speech Monographs 28 (1961): 131-142; Paul Heinberg, "Relationships of Content and Delivery to general Effectiveness," Speech Monographs 30 (1963): 105-107; Herbert W. Hildebrandt and Wallace W. Stevens, "Manuscript and Extemporaneous Delivery in Communicating Information," Speech Monographs 30 (1963): 371-372; W. Barnett Pearce and Forrest Conklin, "Nonverbal Vocalic Communication and Perceptions of a Speaker, Speech Monographs 38 (1971): 235-241.

[14] D. F. Gundersen and Robert Hopper, "Relationships Between Speech Delivery and Speech Effectiveness," Communication Monographs 43 (1976): 164.

[15] Pearce and Conklin, 241.

[16] Gundersen and Hopper, 165.

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